



MILLENNIAL STAR

VOLUME 119 NUMBER 12

CHRISTMAS ISSUE

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THE MILLENNIAL STAR is the official publication of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Great Britain. Published monthly. Rates: 10s. per year, 1s. per copy. The *Star* is not responsible for unsolicited manuscripts, but welcomes contributions. Address correspondence to : 50 Princes Gate, Exhibition Road, London, S.W.7, England. Printed by F. J. Lamb (Printers) Ltd., 173a Northcote Road, London, S.W.11.

Fatal Decisions

EACH day we live is fraught with the making of decisions: "to do or not to do" about *What? Where? How? When? Who?* One of the great lessons of life has been learned when we realise that such decisions concern giving up some things that matter little in exchange for others that matter much.

As another year changes from a stern reality to a statistical A.D. we may be assured that a new frontier of decisions is before us. They may be fatal or, otherwise, to the well-being of our soul. The very purpose of life—its involvement with the free agency of man—the ever present forces of good and evil make this so.

Some of our fatal decisions could be:

1. To think (and act accordingly) that we will not be held responsible for our actions in this life; that we can sin a little and escape the consequences; that moral restraints are unnecessary; and that what we do is our own concern.

2. To think that young people must have their "fling," or sow their wild oats.

3. To believe that we can be prepared to dwell in the presence of our Father in heaven by just being "good" (absence of evil), and to exclude from our lives the element of positive sacrifice and service to God, His Church and our fellowmen.

4. To think that spiritual health can be maintained without prayer, study, worship, service, obedience to God's commandments, and enduring to the end.

5. To allow little personal grievances to deflect us from the path of duty; to diminish or end our Church activity because of what someone else has said or done.

6. To exercise authority in our home, our business, or our Church capacity in any degree of unrighteousness or with any influence other than kindly "persuasion, long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned."

7. To choose the things of the world—ways of the world—the social habits of the world, however enticing they may appear on the surface, and to let them come between us and our duty to the Gospel.

The consequences of all these and other choices which are persistently before us now and in the future, have faced man from the days of Father Adam to the present. Cain, the son of Adam was told, "If thou doest well shalt thou not be accepted." Joshua pleaded, "But as for me and my house we will serve the Lord." Paul prayed, "I have finished my course, I have kept the faith." The Prophet Joseph Smith's benediction was, "I have a conscience void of offence . . ."

The knowledge that we brought nothing into this world and can take nothing (no material thing) out ought to encourage us to be devoted to the lasting and enduring values as we make our choices in the year ahead.

"For what is a man profited, if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul."

C. G. M. Kerr.

DELBERT L. STAPLEY
of the Council of the Twelve



TO KNOW THE CHRIST

THE Lord Jesus Christ, shortly before the betrayal, lifted up His eyes to heaven in a pleading intercessory prayer for His disciples, present and future, whom the Father had given and would give unto Him, and uttered this profound statement of truth which is applicable and binding upon all mankind :

“And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.”¹

To know God the Father and His beloved Son Jesus Christ, our Redeemer and Saviour, is life eternal.

But do men truly know them, their attributes, characteristics, and powers? Surely such knowledge can be had; otherwise, our Saviour would not have expressed this thought and admonition.

When Philip said unto Christ,

... “shew us the Father and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?”²

Paul declared to the Corinthian saints that Christ is the image of God,³ and to the Hebrews that Christ is the ex-

press image of God's person.⁴ It is logical for the Only Begotten Son of the Eternal God in the flesh to be in the express image of his father's person. For like produces like, and any earthly son we know—and the earthly is typical of the heavenly—is in the image of his father. It is also true in mortal life that some sons are in the express image of their father's person. In modern revelation we learn that Seth, the son of Adam,

"Was a perfect man and his likeness was the express likeness of his father, insomuch that he seemed to be like unto his father in all things and could be distinguished from him only by his age."⁵

Could that not be what Christ meant when he said to Philip, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father"? Paul, the Apostle, taught that Christ was the express image of God's person. This also accords with modern day revelation that, "God the Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's."⁶

Now Jesus said, "... The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do ..."⁷ Also, "... but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things."⁸ Here Christ informs us that He was imitating His Father and the Father's works which the Father had performed previously in His own experience, which proves both Father and Son possess like individual characteristics, attributes and powers. When Thomas asked, "Lord, how can we know the way?" Jesus answered and declared, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me."⁹ "... For there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved," declared the Apostle Peter to the rulers, elders, and scribes of the Jewish factions.¹⁰ As Jesus walked in the Temple in Solomon's porch, the Jews came to Him and solemnly asked, "If thou be the Christ tell us plainly." Jesus answered

them saying, "... The works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me."¹¹

Truly the works, miracles, and teachings of the Christ together with heavenly appearances and confirmations of angelic personages, and the declarations of God the Father in the presence of accredited witnesses, testify fully and conclusively Christ to be the Only Begotten Son of God in the flesh, our Redeemer, Saviour, and Lord.

After Christ's ministry on earth, His death on the cross, and glorious resurrection from the dead He appeared unto His disciples and opened their understanding of the scriptures concerning Him, how that all the scriptures written concerning the happenings of His life, death and resurrection had been fulfilled. Then He said unto them, "Ye are witness of these things."¹² The Apostle Peter taught Cornelius and his household all about the Christ, His message, death, and resurrection, declaring,

"... God ... shewed him (the resurrected Lord) only: not to all the people, *but unto witnesses chosen before of God*, even to us, who did eat and drink with Him after he rose from the dead. To him give all the prophets witness ..."¹³

The prophets before Christ did testify of His coming and prophesied sufficiently concerning his life, ministry, works and miracles to identify Him with absolute certainty. They also foretold His death on the cross and resurrection to glory as a sealing act to His ministry and divine commission to atone for the sins of men. Isaiah prophesied,

"Therefore, the Lord himself shall give you a sign. Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son and shall call his name Emmanuel."¹⁴

This and other prophecies by the olden prophets began their fulfillment in the announcement of the Angel Gabriel to Mary that she should bring

forth a son and call his name Jesus.

"He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: . . . and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end."¹⁵

An angel of God in glory appeared to the shepherds tending their flocks by night and declared,

". . . behold, I bring you tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."¹⁶

They made known abroad the saying which was told them by the angel and the heavenly host which accompanied him, concerning this child born of Mary in a manger.

John the Baptist, the forerunner of Christ, was given a sign by which he could recognise the Son of God. When he saw Jesus coming to him he said to his disciples, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." God the Father also spoke from heaven testifying of His Son to all the people assembled at his baptism of the Christ, by announcing, ". . . This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."¹⁸ He declared these same words from heaven again to Peter, James and John when they were with Christ upon the Mount at the time Jesus was transfigured before them.¹⁹ On another occasion in the presence of His disciples, Jesus, supplicating the Father, said,

"Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again. The people therefore, that stood by, and heard it, said that it thundered: others said, An angel spake to him. Jesus answered and said, This voice came not because of me, but for your sakes."²⁰

The voice of God was a confirming witness that the man Jesus whom they knew, was the Christ, the very Son of the Eternal Father. In answer to the query by the Lord to Peter, ". . . whom say ye that I am?" Peter emphatically

declared, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."²¹ Even unclean and evil spirits who knew Christ in the spirit world recognised Him in the flesh and confessed Him with positive knowledge, "Thou art Christ the Son of God."²²

The works and miracles of Christ, the evidences and testimonies of faithful, true, and actual witnesses, of all they had seen and heard, even to the voice of God speaking from the heavens, are convincing proofs that Jesus was not merely a well principled man and a great teacher, but the actual Son of God, the Redeemer and Saviour of the world, the exemplar to all mankind, whom to know and love and follow is life eternal.

Now witnesses saw the risen, resurrected Lord, showing that He is alive today just as the Angel Gabriel declared to Mary, the mother of Jesus, "Of His kingdom there shall be no end."²³ There were many appearances of the risen Lord to His disciples after His passion. First, He appeared to Mary Magdalene.²⁴ Second, to the disciples on their way to Emmaus.²⁵ Third, to His disciples who were gathered together following the resurrection considering the important events and happenings of the preceding few days, wherein their Lord was betrayed, crucified, had slept in the tomb for three days, and then was resurrected to life again. He invited them:

"Behold my hands and my feet . . . handle me and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have."²⁶

Fourth, in the Acts of the Apostles, Luke the Physician tells us that Christ, after His passion,

". . . shewed himself alive . . . by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God."²⁷

Fifth, Paul the Apostle, in his letter to the Corinthian saints, testifies that after Christ's resurrection He was seen

of Peter, then of the Twelve, then above 500 brethren at once; after that by James, then of all the Apostles, and last of all by himself.²⁸ Sixth, the concluding New Testament account of witnesses for our consideration is highly significant, for it furnishes hope and faith to all for the future. It deals with an important event subsequent to Christ's resurrection and following the 40 days spent with His disciples, teaching and instructing them in the things of His kingdom.

"And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel: Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven."²⁹

Christ was received into heaven with his resurrected body. If He is to return in like manner at His second coming, as this scripture describes, He will come in that same body. This is further verified by prophecy to a branch of the House of Israel who shall ask the Lord, at His second coming,

"What are these wounds in thine hands and in thy feet? Then shall they know that I am the Lord; for I will say unto them: These wounds are the wounds with which I was wounded in the house of my friends. I am he who was lifted up. I am Jesus Christ that was crucified. I am the Son of God."³⁰

In the Book of Mormon there is recorded a beautiful account of Christ's visit to the Western continent after His resurrection. At that appearance, God the Father spoke from heaven declaring, "Behold my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased, in whom I have glorified my name; hear ye him!"³¹ On that occasion Jesus Christ announced himself, "Behold, I am Jesus Christ, whom the prophets

testified shall come into the world."³² At the invitation of their Lord, a large number were privileged to come forward and, according to the historical account,

"That ye may thrust your hands into my side and also that ye may feel the prints of the nails in my hands and in my feet, that ye may know that I am the God of Israel and the God of the whole earth and have been slain for the sins of the world . . . And when they had all gone forth and had witnessed for themselves, they did cry out with one accord, saying: Hosanna! Blessed be the name of the Most High God! And they did fall down at the feet of Jesus, and did worship him."³³

By this friendly and compelling demonstration Jesus assured the people assembled that He was truly their risen Lord, as several of their prophets had foretold. The testimony of these many witnesses has come down to us in this sacred volume of scripture.

All these evidences and testimonies of witnesses are persuasive and convincing to the seeker for truth, light and knowledge concerning God and His beloved Son, whom to know is life eternal. Mankind need not struggle in the dark to gain faith in the only true God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent nor in the gospel plan of life and salvation. Even though Christ had commissioned His apostles to the work of the ministry, He advised them to tarry in the city of Jerusalem until, said he, ". . . I send the promise of my Father upon you . . ."³⁴ He also promised and charged them,

". . . ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa, and in Samaria and unto the uttermost parts of the earth."³⁵

The Comforter, or the Holy Ghost, which Christ promised to send is the Spirit of Truth and is to guide the followers of Christ into all truth. The Holy Ghost is to testify of the Father and the Son and is a teacher and a

(continued on page 396)

*From a missionary just released,
reminiscences and hopes
in the Christmas spirit*

THOUGHTS IN SEASON

by Arthur Bassett
St. Anthony, Idaho

AS I look forward to a reunion with my family this Christmas after two years in the mission field, paramount in my mind are thoughts of the personal associations I've had with saints and missionaries here. And as I reflect on the mission of Jesus of Nazareth, I feel that the essence of His message concerned relationships such as these, and the joy they can provide. Such joy can only come through knowing our fellowmen and serving them.

The greatest share of the Christmas legacy to survive till our day epitomises goodwill toward men, and yet one of the beautiful stories connected with Christ's coming into the world that most exemplifies man's love for his fellow men is seldom heard at Christmas; it was enacted not in Palestine, but in the Western Hemisphere, and is recorded in the first chapter of the Third Book of Nephi in the Book of Mormon. A proclamation had gone throughout the land of Zarahemla saying that all people who believed in the "foolish traditions" concerning the coming of Christ would be put to death, unless the promised signs appeared before a specified day. Fearing for his brethren, and impelled by his love for them, the prophet Nephi—later chosen by Christ as one of His twelve disciples in the Americas—

pleaded with God for the protection of his people. Imagine the scene which there unfolded. This was no ordinary prayer—Nephi spent the entire day in supplication to God—but the pleading of a soul bound on a great mission, fighting for the lives of those he loved. Who can contemplate Nephi's thoughts and emotions as the voice of the pre-existent Christ came to him? "Lift up your head and be of good cheer for . . . on the morrow come I into the world." The salutation is not unlike that of the angelic hosts to the shepherds: "Fear not: for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy . . . for unto you is born this day . . . Christ the Lord." And when He came He taught the very message Nephi had so faithfully practised; His plan was one of love of God and love of man.

We readily can understand why we should love God as we owe to Him everything that we possess. But why should we love our fellowmen? What do we owe to those around us? How can we benefit by loving our neighbours?

Each person has something to contribute to the development of every other soul. We are told in the *Pearl of Great Price* that every man is an individual identity: no two can be alike. Each possesses something unique which no other has experienced. Each has some capability which no one else can duplicate. And, conversely, every person has some quality which we lack. For this reason, it is wise to learn to look into other people; in our own interest, we should find out about those around us. They'll bring some wonderful things out of us which we never dreamed were there. Unhappy indeed is the man or woman who has never known the adventure of a close friendship—a friendship which brings to one a feeling unlike anything obtainable in any other way. According to the word of God, every person has the ability to kindle such a friendship if he tries.

The Christmas gifts by which we remember the Saviour furnish an opportunity to further friendships and to practice the love He taught. The most worthwhile gift I ever gave was a wooden chest to my older brother. In this chest were gathered scrapbooks and journals of his life, some of which I compiled myself. In the process of assembling these I gained a better understanding of him. (I still feel personalised scrapbooks and things of this nature are the greatest gifts you can give because of their lasting value for generations to come.) Everyone knows the thrill of Christmas-time when, for a period, we forget ourselves in procuring gifts for others. That's what cause such a wonderful feeling at Christmas—it isn't the lights or the carols—the real spirit of Christmas comes in the feeling of brotherly love.

Often in the scriptures we have accounts of giving and receiving to the betterment of all. When he left his sons, Mattathias, the father of

Maccabeas and a very loyal Jew, told them,

"I exhort you, especially to agree with one another; and in what excellency any one of you exceeds another, to yield to him so far, and by that means to reap the advantages of everyone's virtues."

Similarly, in our time, the Lord has asked us to love one another. How much fuller this Christmas would be if we all as Church members adopt the salutation expressed in the 133 verse of the 88 section of the Doctrine and Covenants:

"Art thou a brother or brethren? I salute you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, in token or remembrance of the everlasting covenant in which covenant I receive you to fellowship, in a determination that is fixed, immovable and unchangeable, to be your friend and brother through the grace of God in the bonds of love, to walk in all the commandments of God, blameless, in thanksgiving, for ever and ever. Amen."

The Bassett home this year will be the scene of a happy reunion, as will be other Latter-day Saint homes throughout the world. This is pleasing in God's eyes. Everywhere that love of men one for another abounds will be a place pleasing to Him. Was He not so moved by the feeling of Nephi for his brethren that he answered his prayer by actually speaking to him? In the same way, part of my heart will always be here among the British people: in the valleys of Wales, in the industrial areas of Manchester, with the saints and missionary companions. And at home I'll know that my Christmas is a rich one because of the inspiring associations I've had here. And rich indeed will be the Christmas of every person whose associations have been uplifting; each of us, particularly at this sacred season, should endeavour to make friendships mutually beneficial, and so memorable as to provide joy even into the eternities to come.

the real story of CHRISTMAS

*Compiled from the Scriptures
and authoritative historical sources
by W. Cleon Skousen*

THERE never was a more exciting Christmas than the first one. Oddly enough, however, the complete, historical account of that first Christmas is seldom told. There are forgotten chapters buried in scriptural records which the pageants at Christmas time fail to relate.

Perhaps we should first remind ourselves that Jesus was born in a conquered country. More than sixty years before His birth the iron-shod wheels of Roman chariots had thundered through the streets of Jerusalem, and Pompei had planted the Roman eagles on Mount Zion. Other Roman conquerors had followed, but in the end Augustus Cæsar placed in power a cruel and cunning Arab to rule the Jewish people. His name was Herod the Great.

Herod pretended to be a convert to the Jewish faith. He began the construction of a magnificent temple. He even married a Jewish princess named Mariamne.¹ She bore him two sons, but they never lived to become rulers in Judea. Herod, their father, had committed murder to secure his throne, and when he saw the people wildly acclaiming Mariamne and her

two half-Jewish sons, he ordered the three of them assassinated.² For this and Herod's other crimes the people deeply despised him.³

In the year of the Romans, 752,⁴ when Herod was past sixty, the central portion of the new temple was practically completed. It was here that the real story of Christmas began.

On a certain day a Levite priest, Zacharias,⁵ came to the temple to preside at the altar. While the congregation awaited without, Zacharias entered the room where the altar stood. It was called the Holy Place. As Zacharias stood there alone he saw straight before him the sacred veil behind which lay the Holy of Holies. In front of the veil was the golden altar with its dying embers from the incense-burning of the night before. To his right Zacharias saw the table of shew-bread and to his left the golden candlestick which furnished the only light.⁶

Zacharias had come to the temple this day with a prayer which had been the burden of his soul for many years. He longed for a son. Although the time had long since passed when he could expect a son; nevertheless, by

*The authentic account of the Nativity
is still the best one*

S



habit, he continued to present his supplication to the Lord. It was the thought uppermost in his mind as he approached the altar of incense.

Suddenly Zacharias stopped. He was almost blinded as the dim half-light of the Holy Place was shattered by the brilliant appearance of a glorious being. An angel stood to the right of the altar surrounded by an intense, heavenly light.⁷ For the first time in more than 400 years of Hebrew history, a revelation had been granted to a priest of the Jewish people.

In terror Zacharias began to retreat, but the holy messenger spoke to him: "Fear not, Zacharias, for thy prayer

is heard and thy wife, Elisabeth, shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John." The humble Levite priest could scarcely believe his ears. The angel continued: "He shall be great in the sight of the Lord... and shall make ready a people prepared for the Lord."⁸

This was too much for Zacharias. How could Elisabeth have a son? It was impossible! She was too old. In this doubting spirit he challenged the angel. "Whereby shall I know this? I am an old man and my wife is well-stricken in years."⁹

The eyes that looked down on Zacharias must have been deep as

eternity. Did Zacharias doubt the power of God? Had he forgotten the mother of Samson, the mother of Samuel and the mother of Isaac—all of whom received their children through a special blessing from heaven? Or did he doubt the authority of the angel?

In tones of solemn rebuke the angel declared:

"I am Gabriel that stands in the presence of God; and I am sent to speak unto thee, and to show thee these glad tidings. Behold, thou shalt be dumb and not able to speak because thou believest not my words"¹⁰

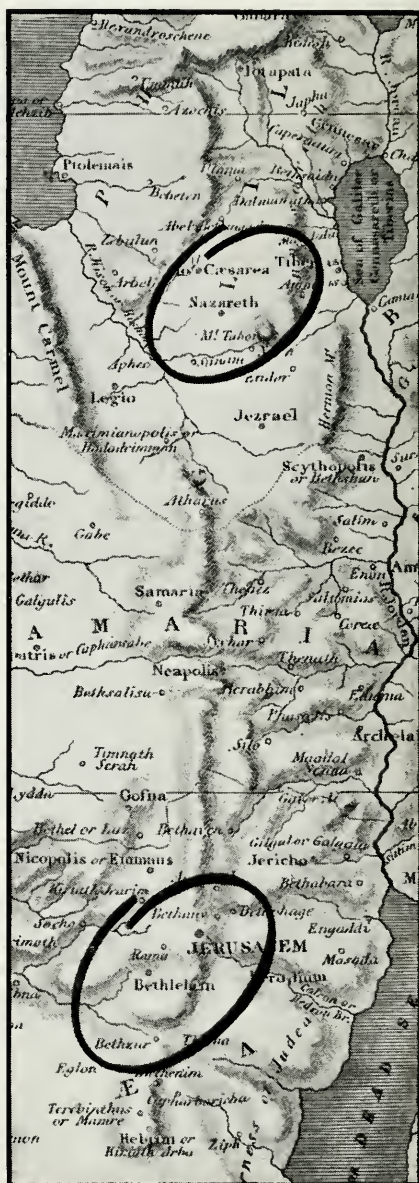
Instantly the angel was gone.

Almost as though he were stunned, Zacharias turned to fulfill the rite of burning the incense. As the clouds of perfumed vapour ascended above the partition, the Levite priest walked out before the people. Why had he been so long? Zacharias tried to explain but his tongue was speechless. Finally, with silent gestures he made them understand he had seen a vision.¹¹

One hundred miles north of Jerusalem lay a certain shallow valley sheltered by the hills of Galilee, where nestled a modest peasant village called Nazareth. Here lived a daughter of Israel who was to become one of the most famous women in the world. Her name was Miryam. Today we call her "Mary," but this is merely the modern translation of her name as it has come down to us through the Greek. Miryam was very popular name among the Jews.¹² Perhaps this was because their prophets had predicted, as had the prophets of the Nephites, that this would be the name of the Messiah's mother.¹³

By right of birth Miryam was a Jewish princess. She was a direct descendant of King David. In fact, only recently she had become betrothed to a young man who was also of the royal Davidic line. His name was Joseph. But at this particular time the

For 100 miles, by foot or animal, down the swale to the left of the centre range of mountains (see map), journeyed Joseph and Mary, that the Son of God might be born in Bethlehem.



fact that two young heirs to the throne of David were living in the obscure village of Nazareth was of little consequence. Poverty and the mad political scramble of ruthless world conquerors had left the natural heirs to the throne of David forgotten and unnamed.

It was probably in the month of August, and just six months after Gabriel appeared to Zacharias, that he also appeared to Mary in Nazareth.¹⁴ She was alone when the celestial vision opened before her. As with Zacharias, she was deeply frightened. The sudden brilliance of the heavenly messenger momentarily overwhelmed her and even before she could speak the salutation of the glorious Gabriel fell upon her ears. "Hail, thou that art highly favoured. The Lord is with thee! Blessed art thou among women!"

Instinctively Mary drew back, but with comforting assurance the angel quickly added, "Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found favour with God." Then in solemn words designed to inspire confidence and understanding he delivered his precious message:

"Behold, thou shalt conceive and bring forth a son. He shall be called Jesus, the Son of the Highest, and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father, David."

Mary could not comprehend. "How shall this be?" she asked.

"The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee. Therefore that which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God."

Mary responded to this thrilling message with words which reflect the depth of her spirituality and the beauty of her character. "Behold the handmaid of the Lord," she said. "Be it unto me according to thy word."

It is doubtful that either Mary or Zacharias knew the true identity of this angel who called himself Gabriel; nevertheless, he must have thrilled as he stood before this beautiful girl. He

knew she was a person of nobility and that her identity and mission had been revealed to the prophets centuries before she was born.¹⁵ Gabriel also knew that Mary was one of his own descendants, for he was none other than the prophet Noah.¹⁶ As Mary looked up into his brilliant countenance she was beholding the unresurrected spirit of her own great patriarchal ancestor.

When he had finished delivering his message Gabriel confided to Mary that her aged cousin, Elisabeth, had also conceived and that already she was in her sixth month.¹⁷ Then he departed.

Left to herself, Mary treasured up the words of the angel in secret. Neither her parents nor even Joseph whom she deeply loved were informed. Nevertheless, there was one person with whom she felt she might share her sacred knowledge. That was Elisabeth. Therefore, she made haste to go straightway and visit her.

Sometime prior to Mary's departure, however—perhaps it was only a few days before—the glory of God encompassed her and for Mary the miracle of new life began.¹⁸

Zacharias and Elisabeth lived in the hill country of Judea not far from Jerusalem. It was a difficult journey of a hundred miles over treacherous roads. When Mary arrived at her cousin's home Elisabeth rose to greet her. The older woman stretched out her hands to the young girl and being moved by the Spirit of the Lord she exclaimed fervently: "Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb!" Then she added humbly, "And whence is this... that the mother of my Lord should come unto me?"

Realising that Elisabeth already knew her great secret, Mary replied simply, "My soul doth magnify the Lord."¹⁹

During the following three months Mary stayed with Elisabeth to await

the time when Elisabeth would be delivered of her child. When her baby came it was a male child just as Gabriel had predicted, and a triumphant blessing for Zacharias and Elisabeth. Relatives, neighbours and friends joined in their rejoicing and all of them gathered to witness the naming of this wonderful infant born out of season.

Not until the ceremony was actually in progress, however, did the officiating priest determine the baby's name; then he found himself in the midst of a family dispute. Elisabeth said the name of the child should be John. Indignant male relatives ordered the priest to name him after his father. Finally, when Elisabeth continued to object, an appeal was made to Zacharias. This was done by signs, for he was deaf as well as without speech.²⁰ Zacharias motioned for a tablet, and when they obtained one he wrote with the stencil, "His name is John." This caused the relatives to marvel. They thought surely the devout Levite would want his only child to bear the name of its father.

But in a moment they had more cause for astonishment. Zacharias suddenly began to speak. For the first time in nearly a year, his tongue was loosed. "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel!" he exclaimed. Then gazing proudly on his infant son and being filled with the spirit or prophecy, Zacharias declared: "Thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest; for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways."²¹

Later that same day, probably in the privacy of their own home, an angel came and ordained the infant John to the Priesthood.²² Never before in history had such a procedure been followed; but here was a choice child, filled with the Holy Ghost from the time of his birth. Of him the Saviour Himself would later say: "Among those that are born of women there is

not a greater prophet than John the Baptist."²³

Now Mary returned to her home in Nazareth and there Joseph anxiously awaited her. How long it was before he learned she was with child we do not know, but when he did become aware of it he was overwhelmed with grief. Under the Jewish law a betrothal was almost as binding as marriage itself and faithlessness was punishable by death.²⁴ The only alternative was to "put her away" by a bill of public divorce.²⁵ Joseph was not bitter against Mary, only sorrowful, and therefore he resolved to "put her away privily."²⁶

During this moment of deep emotional strain, no word of explanation escaped Mary's lips. In fact, she herself was probably without knowledge concerning the will of the Lord on this subject. She knew not but what her sacred mission might require her to forfeit her betrothal to Joseph.

In the dark hours of the night, while Joseph feverishly pondered the sudden shipwreck of his prospective marriage, the angel of the Lord appeared in a dream and said:

"Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. She shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins."²⁷

Who will describe the transitional joy which flooded the mind of Joseph as this revelation brought to him a beautiful and sympathetic understanding of Mary's sacred calling? And who will record the tender scene when he confided to Mary that now he shared her secret?

Joseph's marriage to Mary must have followed immediately, for the angel commanded it, and by the time of the taxing or census ordered by Cæsar, Joseph and Mary are specifically referred to as husband and wife.²⁸

It was early in April, in the year of the Romans, 753, that Joseph and Mary came to Bethlehem. The exact date of these events was not certainly known until 1830 when the Lord affirmed that April 6th of that year marked 1,830 years since the Saviour was born in the flesh.²⁹ Prior to that time no one knew the precise date. Authorities conceded, however, that December 25 was not celebrated as Christmas until the Fourth Century A.D. And it was established on that date simply for convenience, because at that time it was celebrated as a national holiday honouring the birth of the Roman god, Sol.³⁰ It was fitting that the true date of the Saviour's nativity should be affirmed through divine revelation.

Since Bethlehem was originally the "City of David" it was therefore the ancestral home of both Mary and Joseph. In other parts of the world the Roman government had required each person to register for the taxation at his place of residence. In Palestine, however, the Jews were allowed to follow their ancient custom of returning to the region of their forefathers to be registered. For this reason Mary and Joseph had come to Bethlehem.

Being of modest circumstances and because Mary's delicate condition required that they travel slowly, Joseph and Mary did not arrive in the vicinity of Bethlehem until long after that notable city had begun to overflow with large crowds from much less distant regions. Jerusalem itself was only six miles away and unaccommodated crowds from the national capital added to the congestion at Bethlehem. In fact, this was also the season for the feast of the passover. This alone would bring tens of thousands to Jerusalem and nearby communities like Bethlehem.



Bethlehem: street scene

As Joseph and Mary neared the end of this long journey they passed flocks of sheep grazing upon the hills. Here their great ancestor, David, had tended flocks in his youth. Here Ruth, their maternal ancestor, had gleaned the fields of grain. To Mary and Joseph this was home and every foot of it seemed saturated with sacred history.

But the City of David did not welcome them. As they threaded their way among the teeming crowds of Bethlehem, Joseph must have felt increasing apprehension. Where would they stay? Everywhere they met with the same rebuff: "No room!"

As time passed the situation became desperate. Knowing Mary's great mission it must have seemed incomprehensible to Joseph that all doors should be closed against them. Could not there be some help? Surely there must be some place of comfort and convenience for a young mother

(continued on page 392)

Christmas is a magic time

CHRISTMAS was a magic word and a magic time when I was a child. It embodied all things happy and wonderful and joyous. It was a time when I believed almost anything could happen.

For weeks before this festive season arrived I lay in my bed at night and stared into the darkness anticipating the fun of riding in our bob-sled with Father and my brothers and sisters to the canyon to cut down our Christmas tree. It was always such fun to sit in the soft straw with a blanket wrapped around me and listen to the sleigh bells tinkle-tinkle as the horses galloped along the snowy road.

by Naomi M. Manwaring

authoress of *Cable Car Joey*
and other books



Then, when we came home laden down with our Christmas tree, Mother had chocolate and apple pie steaming on the kitchen table and we always laughed and talked as we ate and planned and wished.

There were nine of us children. I was the youngest and more than anything else in the world I wanted a real live baby brother or sister that Christmas.

"Not a baby doll," I explained to Mother and Father and my brothers and sisters gathered around our kitchen table. For today, we had been after our Christmas tree and it was already standing tall and stately in our parlour waiting to be decorated. "Anything can happen at Christmas time, it's a magic time you know. I'm going to wish for a real live baby that cries and wiggles and squirms."

Suddenly as I stopped talking everything was so quiet in our kitchen I could hear the kettle humming on the stove. Katie, my sister, tugged at my sleeve and whispered, "Silly, you can't get a baby just like that."

I felt like crying right there. The rest of the family seemed like strangers, sitting there staring at me so quiet-like.

I guess my lips were quivering and the tears starting to spill over when Mother gathered me on to her lap and stroked my hair as she said, "Karen, everyone loves babies. It is perfectly natural for you to want a baby. After all, Christmas is a holiday to celebrate the birthday of our Saviour, the babe born in a manger."

"But Dearie,"—Daddy always called Mother that,—“Karen must learn that there are some things impossible, even at Christmas."

I didn't want to, but I couldn't help it—I mean I couldn't help the stream of tears when Father said that.

"Don't cry baby," Mother said, "Sometimes magic things happen at Christmas. We can't promise you a baby, but perhaps—well, if God sees fit to send us a baby there'll be one for Christmas."

That night when we knelt in family prayer it wasn't my turn to pray, but after Joel, that's my brother, had finished and we all had said "Amen," I tacked a prayer of my own on the end and asked God if he could possibly see His way clear, I'd like a baby for Christmas. I told Him I didn't want anything else—only that.

We always decorated our Christmas tree on Christmas eve and that made it even more magic, with the candles twinkling and flickering over the tinsel and holly berries and popcorn strings.

I always made a wish when Father hung the Star of Bethlehem on the very top of the tree. Tonight I wished out loud; I couldn't help it because I wanted my wish to come true in the very worst way.

"God, please bring me a baby—a real one, not a baby doll, nor a baby puppy, nor a baby kitten, just a real live baby that will snuggle in my arms and let me rock it to sleep."

I was kind of sorry I'd wished it when I looked up and saw my brothers and sisters and Father and Mother all looking at me sadly. I thought I was going to cry and I had to swallow a big lump that kept coming into my throat while we sang about the "Babe in the Manger" and "Silent Night."

I hoped that angels who watched over the baby Jesus that night long

ago were watching over a baby for me this Christmas eve, too.

I guess there wasn't much I'd left undone. Besides praying and wishing, I'd sent an even dozen letters to Santa Claus. I'd told him over and over again to take all his toys to other children because I wanted only one thing—a real live baby.

Christmas eve I couldn't sleep because I kept trying to make up my mind where Santa would put a real live baby if he decided to bring me one. It would be too big for my stocking, too small for the big easy chair by the fireplace. It would be too heavy to lay among the branches of the Christmas tree. The floor was too cold and hard for a tiny baby. And then—and then—

"I heard the bells on Christmas day . . ." It was morning and I jumped out of bed and knew that the bells I heard was Father playing the organ and that Santa Claus had been here.

I rushed downstairs and into the parlour. I knew then that I had been a sleepy head because all the family were there ahead of me.

Father started playing, "Away in a manger, no crib for His bed . . ." when I saw it. It was a full size baby crib under the Christmas tree.

I didn't hear the rest of the song as I walked to the crib and looked down on the most beautiful baby doll I had ever seen. I swallowed harder and faster than I had ever done before. Somehow I managed to smile as my brothers and sisters gathered around me singing and smiling at me. Father looked over his shoulder as he played and nodded happily. Mother stood beside me. I thought I saw her brush away a tear from her cheek; then she

smiled as if asking my forgiveness as she said, "You'll love her darling, she is the most beautiful baby we could find."

I reached into the crib and took the baby doll in my arms and hid my face against her. I didn't want to let Mother and Father see me crying and I just couldn't help it. I walked quickly on the other side of the tree. I knew I must pretend I wasn't disappointed.

I asked God to forgive me for acting a falsehood, but I just couldn't let my wonderful family know that I was hurt more than I ever had been before.

I knew we weren't rich and when I saw my brothers and sisters with less beautiful gifts I realised they had done this for me. Only last year, Kathy had wanted a doll this beautiful when she saw it in a store window—but Father had said Santa Claus couldn't afford it.

So you understand why I had to pretend. I smiled and played house with my doll and rocked her and did my best to pretend she was a real live baby while Father roasted chestnuts in the fireplace.

I was really glad to put my doll back in its crib when Father said, "We have time before dinner to take our gifts to our Lamanite brothers and sisters." And I ran to get my hood and coat.

The snowflakes drifted down on my coat and face as we rode with my brothers and sisters in our bob-sled to the Indian Reservation to deliver cakes, pies, toffees and toys. This was a family ritual and Christmas could never be such without sharing our goodies with the Indian children.

I knew that these little red-skinned children were descendants of our Lamanite brothers. I'd heard the

story in Primary and around our own fireside.

Little White Wing Clara put her baby sister down on the rug of their home so that she could take the stocking full of toffee. How I wished she would hand me the baby in exchange. I would have gladly given her my baby doll and crib too.

All the way home I could feel the tears ready to tumble over and I was glad when the snowflakes melted on my face. My father and brothers and sisters wouldn't know which was a tear and which a snowflake.

Then I felt ashamed and tried all the harder to show Father how happy I was by singing with him as we rode home, but by dinner time the lump had grown so big in my throat I was afraid I'd choke on the roast turkey, dumplings, salad and mashed potatoes Father put before me.

"Karen," he said kindly teasing me, "if you're going to take good care of that new baby doll, you'll have to eat every bit of this dinner."

"Please God," I prayed silently, "help me to swallow my food, don't let me choke or they'll know how disappointed I am."



I didn't want to let Mother and Father see me crying and I just couldn't help it

I could see all eyes looking at me and faces smiling and nodding. I felt just like the time when I'd eaten too many peach pits and they were ready to come up. I wondered if God had forgotten me, for I became more and more scared as the lump got bigger and bigger.

Then I heard it—faintly at first. Knock-knock, knock-knock KNOCK. Someone was knocking at our front door. I jumped down from my chair.

"Please Mother," I pleaded, "please let me answer it."

She nodded and I hurried to the front door. Maybe it is someone bringing me a baby, I thought.

But when I opened the door I knew it wasn't, for there standing on the doorstep, was an Indian woman. I recognised her as one from the Indian Reservation.

"Me sick, me sick," she groaned.

"Mother, Mother," I called, running back to the dining room, "Come quickly."

I ran back to the door and as Mother took her arm and helped her inside the house I remembered giving her children toffee and pies that very morning as she stood smiling and nodding her thanks.

Her pretty moccasins were wet, and her red bow in her hair drooped, heavy with snow. She was shivering and Mother took her into the parlour to the warm stove.

I ran to get a blanket, forgetting all about my disappointment for the first time all day as I helped Mother make her comfy and warm by the stove.

The Indian woman shooed her hands at me the way Father shoos chickens out of the vegetable garden and said, "Papoose go away."

"Go back to your dinner, dear," said Mother, "I'll take care of her and make her comfortable. I'll find out what is wrong. She must have got lost in the snowstorm trying to find her way into town."

When I went back to the table I felt as if a magic spell had suddenly been cast upon me. I no longer had the lump in my throat. I forgot about the peach pits. I even forgot about the real baby I didn't have. Now, as I look back I know it was just forgetting about my own grief and thinking

about the unfortunate Lamanite woman. And suddenly I remembered how lucky and blessed I was to have such a wonderful Christmas, a nice home and family, and a—crib and baby doll.

I ate every bit of food from my piled-up plate, even the dumplings. Sally, my next oldest sister came singing through the kitchen door carrying a steaming plum pudding, when the door from the parlour opened and there stood Mother.

I shall never forget the radiant look on her face when she looked at me and said, "Darling, come sit in your rocking chair. I have a Christmas gift for you."

I heard her stoop and whisper over Father's shoulder as she came toward me, "The angels are hovering over our house tonight."

Father looked up quickly, then came to stand beside me as Mother placed something squirming and wiggling, all wrapped up in my baby doll blanket.

And the magic of Christmas was again restored in my heart as I pulled back the blanket and looked down at the real live baby, a Lamanite baby, sleeping snugly in my arms.



British Mission Greetings

To our Brethren and Sisters
of Modern Israel . . .

Our hearts are full of gratitude for the privilege and blessing of labouring among you the past two years, for the daily evidence we see of your devotion and willingness to sacrifice in the cause of building up the latter-day Kingdom of Israel on earth.

As we contemplate ancient Israel's failures we would say, "Let not the things of this world come between you and your duty to the Gospel cause."

Sincere good wishes,
President and Sister Kerr and Family



John
Nolan
President Kerr
Sister Kerr

THESE British missionaries, or their companions, a month ago, a year ago, ten years ago, may have knocked at your door ("I'm a Mission Mormony . . ."), eaten at your table (with infamous appetite), or slept in your house (one on the couch, one on the floor): if they did, they undoubtedly brought a smiling portion of the Spirit of God to share with you. So pretend you've just disembarked the *Queen Mary* and are about to tour the British Mission. Be welcomed by the London Office Staff; then visit Bristol; go northward to Wales and Liverpool; cross the Irish Channel to Ireland; return by boat to Scotland; then journey southward through England to Newcastle, Manchester, Hull, Leeds, Sheffield, Birmingham, Nottingham, Norwich and London . . .



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TERRY WARNER
millennial star
redwood city, california



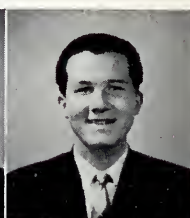
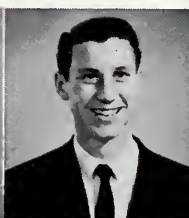
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. . . Whoops! late already . . .



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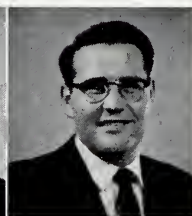
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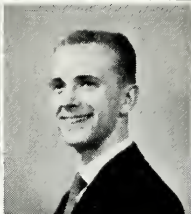
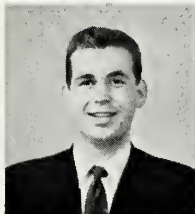
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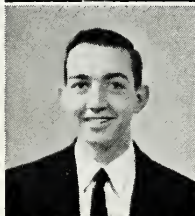
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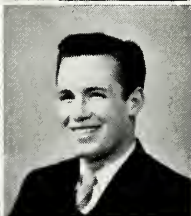
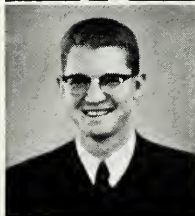
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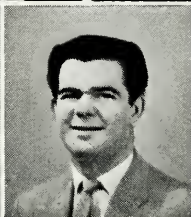
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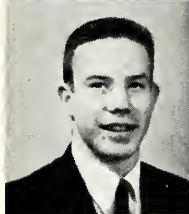
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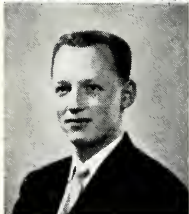
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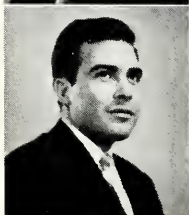
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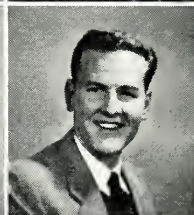
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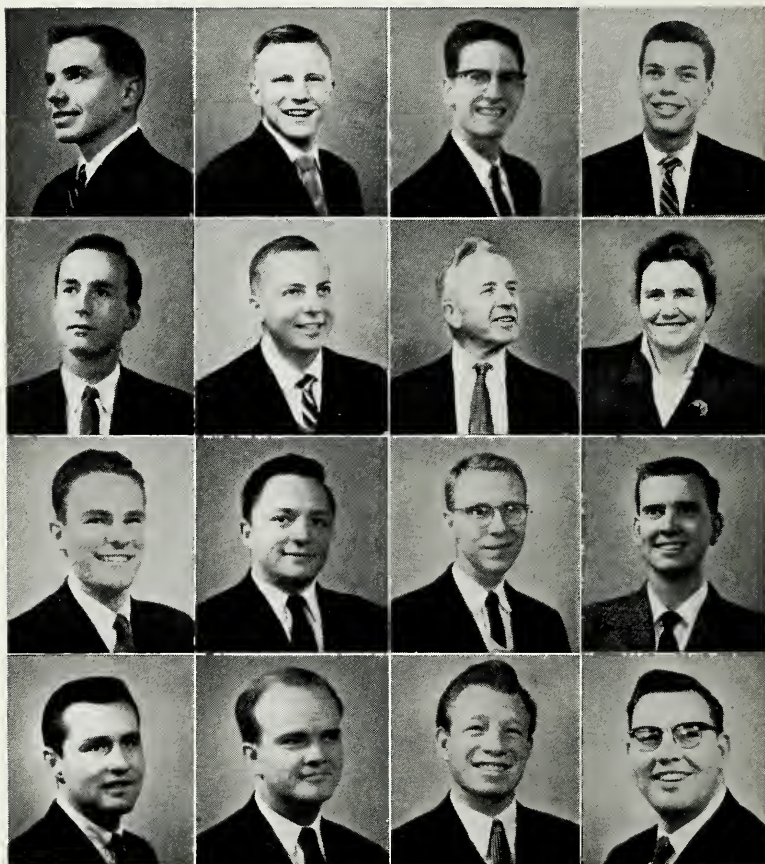
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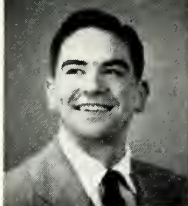
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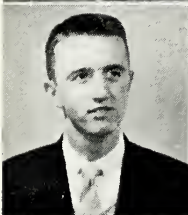


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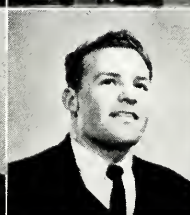
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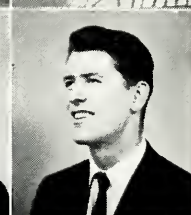
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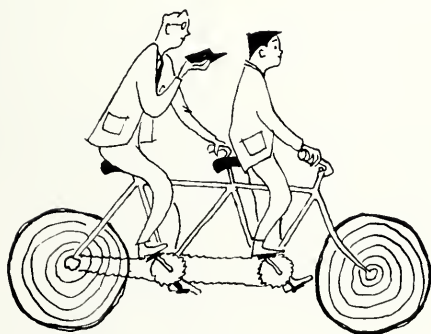
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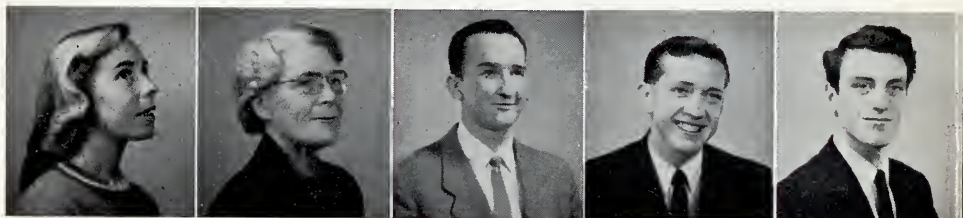
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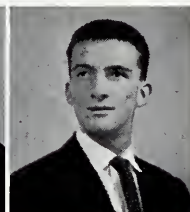
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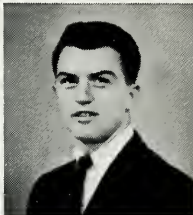
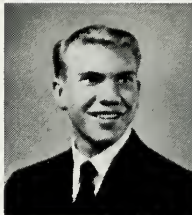
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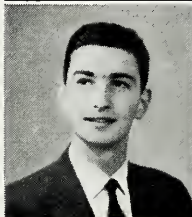
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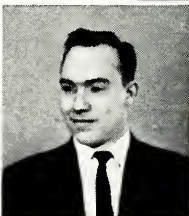
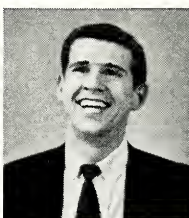
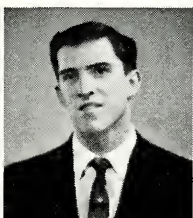
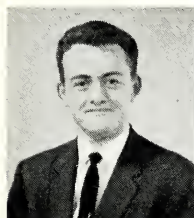
NOTTINGHAM

ROLFE KERR
supervising elder
tremonton, utah

KENNETH KIMBALL
salt lake city, utah

JANET BETTERIDGE
stroud, gloucestershire

RONALD LINFORD
long beach, california



JAMES SCORESBY
iona, idaho

M. BRUCE CARR
tremonton, utah

RONALD BURNHAM
phoenix, arizona

GARY L. STEWART
kaysville, utah

ROBERT L. PUFFER
beaver, utah

THOMAS J. PIKE
salt lake city, utah

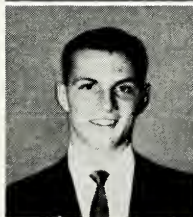
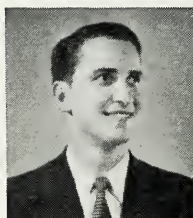
DONALD CHISHOLM
salt lake city, utah

NIEL CROFTS
firth, idaho

. . . because they arrived in Great Britain too late to have their pictures taken, Anne Coombs, Liverpool District, from Boulder, Utah; Marilyn Johnson, Nottingham District, from Salt Lake City, Utah; Richard B. Oliver, Welsh District, from Los Angeles, California; Clynn Wells Richman, Welsh District, from Promontory, Utah; Marla Stone, Irish District, from Lake-wood, California; Ardythe Twitchell, Scottish District, from Delta, Utah; Robert F. Parker, Nottingham District, from Logan, Utah; Darrell G. Bailey, Liverpool District, from Woodscross, Utah; Louie G. Youngkeit, Liverpool District, from Anaheim, California; Dale W. Harrell, London District, from Salt Lake City, Utah; and LeGrande N. Lamb, London District, from Chandler, Arizona, are not pictured here.

NORWICH

LARRY T. WIMMER
district president
safford, arizona



ARTHUR W. SADLER
atamont, utah

MARK D. JEFFS
salt lake city, utah

LOREN BROCKBANK
salt lake city, utah

MARTIN GURNEY
magrath, canada

GERALD MAXWELL
salt lake city, utah

LE ET TA PRATT
downey, idaho

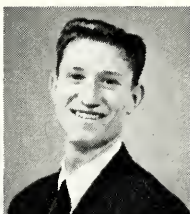
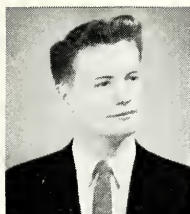
ALAN C. JACOBS
declo, idaho

HARRISON DAVIS
ogden, utah

LONA CHRISTENSEN
logan, utah

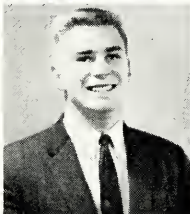
IRMA D. CONDIE
salt lake city, utah

LONDON



MERRILL BATEMAN
supervising elder
american fork, utah

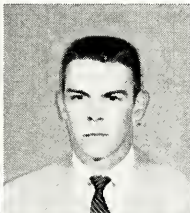
FERRELL BAILEY
salt lake city, utah



NIEL J. NIELSON
caldwell, idaho

WALLACE HAMBLIN
kanab, utah

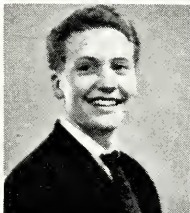
L. DWIGHT KELSEY
salt lake city, utah



ROBERT DE AUSTIN
pasadena, california

JACK L. BOOTH
price, utah

ROSS W. BAUM
heber city, utah



ALMA L. CARPENTER
evanston, wyoming

GARY GILBERT
salt lake city, utah

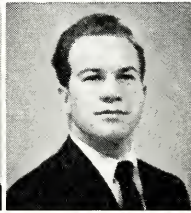
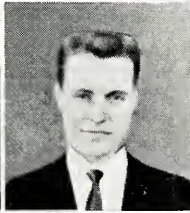
FRANK CRAVEN
bountiful, utah



JOHN B. ANDERSON
salt lake city, utah

LEONARD RUSSON
salt lake city, utah

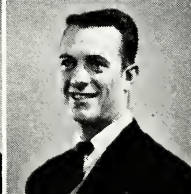
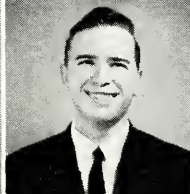
SAMUEL FRANCIS
springville, utah



CRAIG MCCUNE
salt lake city, utah

CARLISLE HUNSAKER
honeyville, utah

VANCE H. WALKER
clifton, idaho



DONALD WILLIAMS
montpelier, idaho

VIRDEN J. BLACKHAM
kenilworth, utah

GENE L. BRADY
midvale, utah

CHRISTMAS STORY (continued)

already feeling the imminent travail of childbirth. But to all his pleas he was turned away. "No room!"

Overwhelmed with anxiety, Joseph was finally forced to accept what he normally would have rejected with disgust: a stable. His soul must have been harrowed to the quick as he led his trembling young wife into this humble abode made for cattle. In haste he prepared for her the most meagre semblance of comfort. No doubt he secured what help he could from the nearby inn, but at best it would have been grossly inadequate. No other king was ever born into the world under so humble a circumstance.

In the year of the Romans, 753, the Jewish nation never dreamed that this was the year of their salvation, the time when their long-awaited Messiah would be born. In the celestial courts of heavenly places the seraphic hosts of angels stood at solemn attention waiting for the great Jehovah to take the step which would usher Him into the forgetfulness of the Second Estate. This was the moment which would divide history. No doubt the ancient saints from Adam to Malachi waited tensely as they saw the great drama about to begin.

Only a mile distant, near the outskirts of the city, certain angels prepared to make their presence known. Shepherds abiding in the fields and watching their flocks by night, were chosen to be the recipients of a magnificent vision. It commenced the very moment Mary's precious infant was born. Immediately the shepherds saw the veil of mortality sheared back, and an angel stood before them with a glory which enveloped the scene in a radiant light. They thought they would be consumed and shrank back in fear, but the angel said:

"Fear not; for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour,

*which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you, ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger."*³¹

At such a moment the hosts of heaven could be held back no longer. The majestic choirs of former-day saints burst into song: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."³²

When the vision closed the shepherds left immediately to go into the town and seek out the location of "the child lying in a manger." Perhaps the flickering flame of a tallow lamp sent its rays into the night to guide them to the stable's portals. And when they had gathered round they found the babe truly wrapped in swaddling clothes and cradled in a manger.

But in addition to that there was nothing unusual in the nativity scene to impress them with its power. They simply beheld a humble Galilean peasant and his wife with a new-born child. There were no halos of light about their persons, no visible cherubim. Nevertheless, with the glory of the angels still fresh in their minds, the shepherds looked upon the sleeping child with devotion and awe. Jehovah had entered mortality!

When the shepherds finally left the stable they ran swiftly to awaken their friends and neighbours. To all who would listen they related the wonderful night vision and the things they had been told concerning this new-born child. But the people were not impressed. The scripture says they merely "wondered."³³ Nevertheless, this did not dampen the ardour of the shepherds. They returned to their flocks "glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen."³⁴

And so the early morning hours of the first Christmas passed without further incident. While the baby slept, Mary treasured in her heart the thrilling triumph of this hour.

And where were the Wise Men?

Although Christmas pageants have it otherwise there were no Wise Men present on the night of nativity. In fact, their homeland was far away to "the East." During the early hours of this first Christmas morning they, like the Nephites, were in their own country rejoicing at the sudden appearance of a great new star in the heavens.³⁵ The prophets had said this star was the sign by which they would know that the Saviour had been born.³⁶ Therefore, the Wise Men promptly prepared to depart for the land of Palestine. They wanted to see this wonderful child and give Him their gifts of devotion. But it was a long journey. As we shall see, the scripture is plain that it was weeks or perhaps even months before the Wise Men arrived in Bethlehem.

Meanwhile Mary and Joseph prepared to fulfil the laws and ordinances prescribed for a new-born child. When the baby was eight days old He was taken to the priest for naming. The name which they gave Him was "Joshua." This was a common name among the Jews, but it was the name the angel had designated. In later life the people called Him "Joshua of Nazareth" to distinguish Him from all other men bearing the same name. Today we call Him "Jesus." But "Jesus" is simply the modified Greek equivalent for the name of Joshua. This name symbolises the mission of the Saviour, for it means, "Jehovah is our Salvation."³⁷

Following this Mary waited and rested for thirty-two days until the prescribed period of "purification" was accomplished. Then Joseph and Mary made the six-mile journey into Jerusalem to present Jesus in the temple. Dedicating this first-born son to the service of God was one of the requirements of the law of Moses.³⁸ It was also required that Mary offer a young lamb and a dove as a sacrifice. However, in the case of poor people, two doves were acceptable. It is signi-

ficant that Mary's offering was two doves.³⁹

Living in Jerusalem at this time was a wise and devout Jew named Simeon. So faithful had he been that the Lord had blessed him with a direct revelation promising him that he should not die until he had seen the Messiah. On this day as he pursued his business in the city, the Holy Ghost suddenly came upon him. It bade him hasten to the temple. Simeon arrived just as the ceremony was beginning. Being constrained of the Spirit, he hastened forward and tenderly took the young child from His mother and held Him in his arms. With deepest emotion Simeon raised his face up toward heaven and said:

"O Lord, now lettest thou servant depart in peace; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation . . . A light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of thy people Israel!"⁴⁰

Then Simeon turned to Mary and in the spirit of prophecy told her of the greatness of the mission her child would perform. He also warned her of the suffering which she, as His mother, would be required to bear—a suffering that would be like the piercing of her soul by a sword.⁴¹ Thirty-three years later at Calvary, Mary learned the literal significance of Simeon's tragic prophecy.

There was also in the temple at this time a very devout and famous woman who enjoyed the spirit of prophecy. She was a widow, eighty-four years of age, who served in the temple night and day. Her name was Anna and she likewise received a testimony of the Holy Ghost that Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah. She bore testimony to those who were present and gave thanks unto God that she had lived to see the Saviour.⁴²

Following the ceremony, Joseph and Mary returned with Jesus to Bethlehem. By this time they had obtained residence in "a house" which Matthew specifically mentions.⁴³

Now it was sometime after this that wise men came to Jerusalem seeking the new-born King of the Jews. Being without guile and innocent of the state of affairs in this part of the world, they went naïvely to Herod, thinking he would be informed of the identity and whereabouts of the new king. But Herod was greatly disturbed by their words. Such convictions as these men carried would surely give credence to certain stories which were rapidly spreading among the common people—stories which had originated with certain shepherds who solemnly testified that the Christ-child indeed had been born.⁴⁴

Hurriedly, Herod conferred with the priests and learned scribes. Where did tradition and prophecy say their king would be born? "In Bethlehem, the City of David," they said.⁴⁵ Frantically, Herod conjured up a scheme. Surely he must not stand by after all he had done—even to the killing of his own wife and children—and allow his throne to be snatched away by some nefarious pretender whom the superstitious populace might raise up to claim as their long-awaited Messiah or divine King! In this spirit of desperate hatred he plotted murder for the child, whoever he was.

Calling the wise men to him "privily," he extracted from them the precise date when the great new star had first been seen in their own country.⁴⁶ When they had told him, Herod made them promise to try and find the child and then inform him so that he might come and worship the new king also. The wise men consented and departed.

Speedily and at night they made their way to Bethlehem. En-route they rejoiced to behold once again the same brilliant star which they had previously seen in their own country marking the date of the Saviour's birth. They seemed to be led to the place where He was, but it did not

turn out to be a stable. Joseph and Mary had long since found better accommodations. Matthew says the Wise Men went into "the house" and there they knelt before the child and worshipped him.⁴⁷ Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

Later when the time came for the Wise Men to depart the angel of the Lord appeared to them in a dream and told them not to go back to Herod but to return to "the East" by a separate way. This they did. Out of the unknown they came, into the unknown they departed. We know nothing more about them, neither their names, their number nor their nationality.⁴⁸ All else that has been said about them is fiction. Their only mark left on the pages of history comprises less than a dozen verses of scripture.

Meanwhile, Herod impatiently awaited the return of the magi, but when all hope was exhausted he lashed out commands to his servile mercenaries to sweep down on Bethlehem and massacre every child under two years of age. Since Herod had specifically asked the Wise Men when the star first appeared which signified the Saviour's birth, it is significant that he ordered all children to be slain who were under *two* years of age.

As the soldiers hastened to obey, they violently perpetrated one of the most horrible crimes ever inflicted upon a helpless community. But Jesus was not there. Scarcely had the wise men departed for the East before an angel warned Joseph to take Mary and Jesus into Egypt.⁴⁹ There they waited safely while the lethal hatred of Herod robbed the weeping mothers in Bethlehem of all their youngest children. But even as Herod ordered this terrible "slaughter of the innocents," the grim reaper of retribution reached out to snatch his own life away. At the very moment when he would have sold his soul to keep his throne, Herod found himself dying of a most loathsome

disease.⁵⁰ For the people, his passing was a blessing. They celebrated with a joyous festival.⁵¹

Down along the banks of the tropical Nile, Joseph and Mary waited with the infant Jesus. Then, even before the messengers could bring word to the general populace, Joseph was told by the angel that Herod was dead. Immediately they prepared to return to their homeland.

Apparently Joseph and Mary had hoped to live permanently in Bethlehem, but as their little caravan neared the region they learned that Herod's cruel son, Archelaus, ruled this part of the kingdom. Tired as they were, they continued their journey and passed on up into the hills of Galilee, finally arriving in Nazareth. There they resolved to make their home.

In all these circumstances three great prophecies were literally fulfilled: that Jesus would be born in Bethlehem,⁵² that he would come up out of Egypt,⁵³ and finally, that He would be called a native of Nazareth.⁵⁴ Though each prophecy seemed to contradict the other two, nevertheless, in the wisdom of heaven, all three found complete fulfillment. In the life of the Saviour, no promise of any prophet concerning him was left unreconciled.

As the years passed by the scripture says, "Jesus increased in wisdom and stature and in favour with God and man." Gradually He learned His true identity. He was taught by ministering angels. At the age of thirty-three He was finally prepared to ascend the heights of the mortal mission to which He was born. At the last moment He could have turned back. But He did not. He passed beneath all things that He might save all things—the human race, the earth and all the life that ever embellished it. The purpose of the Saviour's mission was broader than many have supposed.

Here, then, we conclude the known history of Christmas. All else that is added is man's home-made invention

—the pleasant lighted tree comes down to us from the days of heathen Rome, the holly wreaths and mistletoe from the ancient, mystic Druids, the exciting visit of St. Nicholas from the fourth century Christian tradition and the happy, jolly Santa Claus from pure modern imagination.⁵⁵

But with it all, the most important thing still survives—the spirit of peace on earth, goodwill toward men. Never at any other season does peace come closer to a universal reality than at Christmas time. More friends are remembered and more enemies forgiven than at any other time of the year. It is but a shadow of things to come.

Not far from us and surrounded by his legions of heavenly hosts, this same Jesus works today toward the time when He will come back to the earth. It will be a glorious day, perhaps much nearer than we think, and when it arrives, men will call it the Millennium—a Christmas season of peace on earth that will last a thousand years!

¹ Josephus, *War of the Jews*, Bk. 1:3

² Farrar, F. W., *The Life of Christ*, p. 51

³ Josephus, *op. cit.*, Bk. 14, 9:4

⁴ Talmage, James E., *Jesus the Christ*.

⁵ Luke 1:5

⁶ Luke 1:11

⁷ Clark, J. Reuben, *Wist Ye not That I Must Be About My Father's Business?*, p. 70

⁸ Luke 1:13, 14

⁹ Luke 1:18

¹⁰ Luke 1:20

¹¹ Luke 1:22

¹² Encyclopedia Americana, (1946), under "Mary."

¹³ Mosiah 3:8

¹⁴ Luke 1:26

¹⁵ 1 Nephi 11:18; Mosiah 5:8; Alma 7:10

¹⁶ *Doc. Hist. of the Church*, Vol. III, p. 386

¹⁷ Luke 1:36

¹⁸ Talmage, *op. cit.*, pp. 83-84

¹⁹ Luke 1:46

²⁰ Luke 1:62

²¹ Luke 1:76

²² D. & C. 84:28

²³ Luke 7:28

²⁴ Deut. 22:23

²⁵ Deut. 24:1

²⁶ Matthew 1:19

²⁷ Matthew 1:20-21

²⁸ Luke 2:5

²⁹ D. & C. 20:1

³⁰ Encyclopedia Americana (1946), under "Christmas,"

³¹ Luke 2:10-12

³² Luke 2:14

³³ Luke 2:18

³⁴ Luke 2:20

³⁵ 3 Nephi 1:21; Matthew 2:2

³⁶ Helaman 14:5

³⁷ Farrar, *op. cit.*, p. 35 and note

³⁸ Exodus 13:2

³⁹ Luke 2:24

⁴⁰ Luke 2:25-32

⁴¹ Luke 2:35

⁴² Luke 2:36-38

⁴³ Matthew 2:11; Farrar, *op. cit.*, p. 31

⁴⁴ Luke 2:17

⁴⁵ Matthew 2:5-6

⁴⁶ Matthew 2:7

⁴⁷ Matthew 2:11

⁴⁸ Talmage, *op. cit.*, p. 99

⁴⁹ Matthew 2:13

⁵⁰ Farrar, *op. cit.*, p. 54

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 55

⁵² Micah 5:2

⁵³ Hosea 11:1

⁵⁴ Matthew 2:23

⁵⁵ Encyclopedia Americana (1946), under "Christmas,"

CHRIST (continued)

revelator. Witness Peter's statement that, "... holy men of God spake as they were moved upon by the Holy Ghost."³⁶ And Paul's declaration, "... no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost."³⁷ John, the Beloved Apostle, taught, "... it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth."³⁸

According to these statements of scripture, the witness of the Holy Ghost which all can enjoy, has the power to bestow knowledge, understanding, faith and the testimony of truth to those who prayerfully seek it. A prophet-writer of Book of Mormon history and doctrine gave this wise and understanding counsel and admonition,

"I would exhort you that ye would ask God the Eternal Father in the name of Christ if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost. And by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things."³⁹

Every individual can realise this promise if he is willing to humble himself and seek the light, knowledge, and intelligence that flows from God through the Holy Ghost. By that power I testify to you, that it is life eternal to know the only true God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent and who in very deed is our Lord, Redeemer and Saviour.

I join with the prophet of this latter-day Church in declaring,

"And now, after the many testimonies which have been given of him, this is the testimony, last of all, which we give of him: that he lives!"⁴⁰

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|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| ¹ John 17 : 3 | ²² Luke 4 : 41 |
| ² John 14 : 8, 9 | Mark 1 : 23-24 |
| ³ 2 Cor. 4 : 4 | ²³ Luke 1 : 33 |
| ⁴ Hebrews 1 : 3 | ²⁴ John 20 : 16-18 |
| ⁵ D. & C. 107 : 43 | ²⁵ Luke 24 : 13-35 |
| ⁶ D. & C. 130 : 22 | ²⁶ Luke 24 : 39 |
| ⁷ John 5 : 19-20 | ²⁷ Acts 1 : 3 |
| ⁸ John 8 : 28 | ²⁸ 1 Cor. 15 : 5-8 |
| ⁹ John 14 : 5-6 | ²⁹ Acts 1 : 9-11 |
| ¹⁰ Acts 4 : 12 | ³⁰ D. & C. 45 : 51-52 |
| ¹¹ John 10 : 23-25 | Zech. 13 : 6 |
| ¹² Luke 24 : 48 | ³¹ 3 Nephi 11 : 7 |
| ¹³ Acts 10 : 40-41, 43 | ³² 3 Nephi 11 : 10 |
| ¹⁴ Isaiah 7 : 14 | ³³ 3 Nephi 11 : 14, 16-17 |
| ¹⁵ Luke 1 : 30-33 | ³⁴ Luke 24 : 49 |
| ¹⁶ Luke 2 : 10-11 | ³⁵ Acts 1 : 8 |
| ¹⁷ John 1 : 29 | ³⁶ 2 Peter 1 : 21 |
| ¹⁸ Matthew 3 : 17 | ³⁷ 1 Cor. 12 : 3 |
| ¹⁹ Matthew 17 : 5 | ³⁸ 1 John 5 : 6 |
| ²⁰ John 12 : 28-30 | ³⁹ Moroni 10 : 4-5 |
| ²¹ Matthew 16 : 16 | ⁴⁰ D. & C. 76 : 22 |

BRANCH AND DISTRICT ACTIVITIES

Birmingham

Though influenza plagued the Birmingham District M.I.A. Ball on October 5, those who were present were boundlessly enthusiastic: it emerged an effervescent evening in which even unpractised dancers could not remain seated!

At the Birmingham Chapel on October 26 a Grand Hallowe'en Carnival maintained the precedent; ingenious side-shows, games and a ghoulish, shrieking, clanging, cobwebby chamber of horrors highlighted the afternoon's fun. An unconventional concert filled the evening: the dramatised tale of a magician (looking strangely like Brother Leslie Megey) whose conjurings kept going awry; Sister Winifred Makin declaiming the

love of a dog; Brother John Joseph selling flypapers and becoming "all stuck-up" himself; and Sister Doris Green's piano-playing. The missionaries evaded convention too, and prepared some "very queer" refreshments.

Hull

Hull Branch Sunday School held their annual outing, playing sports and building castles at the windswept Hornsea seaside site. A parody on commercial TV was staged October 12 by the Hull Priesthood; drama, comedy and song was interspersed by advertisements for Church activities and fictitious products, all due to the work of Brother Mike Bamfield and two tape recorders.

On October 26 Hallowe'en held sway; apple-bobbing, a flour pie, and a short play were the evening's features.

42 members and 31 investigators flocked to Grimsby's social, held October 5. Though space was scarce, interest in the games, dancing, skits, American hamburgers and apple pies was keen. Elder Ross Woodward's scenic slide views of England and America capped a heartwarming evening.

Ireland

A Primary under Sister Sinclair has been organised in Bangor. The Bangor Branch's recent Harvest service gave them an opportunity to take fruit and vegetables to the poor.

The brethren at Belfast make toys industriously to sell for their building fund. Saturday, October 26, both the Primary's surprise party and the M.I.A. Hallowe'en Party, which 45 people attended, were held in Belfast's present Chapel.

Manchester

The young people of Ireland, Hull, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester and Sheffield Districts congregated at Wythenshawe for a week-end of games, barbecue, testimonies, Sunday School and motion pictures. All concur in the wish to repeat the festivity very soon.

Newcastle

Newcastle District held their M.I.A. Harvest Ball on October 11. At it a Highland dancing display was given by Sister Grace Johnson of South Shields. She and her sister Barbara, ages 12 and 16 respectively, have won many honours in Scottish, Irish and Gypsy dancing against competitors much older than themselves.

Nottingham

At Hucknall Branch, Brothers Joseph Hayes and Ernest Hammond organised a September 28 supper; the Relief Society's meal began the enjoyments and Brothers Tom Hezseline and Norman Standley, Sisters Aileen Stocks and Amy and Tina Bryant, and Elder Rolfe Kerr followed the food with entertainment.

A progressive ghost story began Nottingham's M.I.A. Hallowe'en party held prematurely on October 23, followed by

a mock seance and hot dogs and orange juice.

On October 26, for the first time in their new Chapel, the Eastwood Branch held a dance which 45 happy people attended. Brother Geoffrey Harris was M.C.

Dances Olde Tyme and Modern, Square and Rock 'n' Roll delightfully entertained 60 members of the Nottingham District M.I.A. at their Autumn Dance on October 19. Brother Harris and Sister Joyce Bowler, the District Supervisors, organised it, while Sister Rhoda S. Tinson, caterer, and Brother Cecil J. Guscott, Master of Ceremonies, ably assisted.

Scotland

Chapel curtains claimed the proceeds of Aberdeen's Hallowe'en party on October 22. Everyone enjoyed the buffet supper in the specially-decorated hall.

At Edinburgh, Newcastle joined Scotland for a Jr. M-Men-Jr. Gleaner Convention, October 26-27. 40 of the Northern youth camped out on mattresses, rock-'n'-rolled to the gramophone and ate heartily of the Relief Society's fine food. On the same week-end Sister Charlotte Sheffield, Miss U.S.A., joined the Edinburgh Sunday School, and spoke at both Sacrament Meeting and the street meeting that followed.

Wales

All the Welsh branches participated in the annual Bazaar and Social in Cardiff on October 26, in which the sisters of the District prepared displays and decorations that accounted for much of the day's success. Following the Bazaar the Cardiff and Merthyr saints presented a concert. Talented Sister Fradd of Cardiff composed many of the sketches and songs of the "Conway Road Follies" opening, and took the stage as a comedienne as well. Cardiff's friends, Mr. and Mrs. Williamson, contributed a vocal duet and Madam Lewpricre a piano recital; both numbers enthralled the saints and climaxed a wonderful day.

Pontypool and Blackwood members presented a slapstick comedy programme for the District's members after Preparation Meeting on November 2. Elders Dutson and Standley as stooges evoked hearty laughter.

ORDINATIONS :

Birmingham District

Walter Allen of Northampton to Teacher
William A. Carr of Northampton to Deacon
Cyril Langford of Northampton to Priest
Leslie A. Rowland of Northampton to Teacher
Arthur J. Turvey of Northampton to Priest
Brian Wade of Northampton to Deacon
Albert C. Austin of Coventry to Teacher
John E. Daves of Coventry to Teacher
John T. Gough of Coventry to Teacher
Leonard Humphries of Coventry to Teacher

Hull District

Charles Calvert of York to Deacon
Raymond Scott of York to Priest
Ralph Scott of York to Priest
David R. Draper of York to Deacon
Ernest W. H. Church of York to Priest
Derek S. Adams of Scarborough to Elder
Albert B. Wardle of Scarborough to Elder
Wilfred Eley of Grimsby to Elder

Leeds District

William Eta Uttley of Halifax to Teacher
Kenneth Bolton of Dewsbury to Teacher

Liverpool District

Paul H. Watson of Southport to Deacon
Thomas M. F. Mitchell of Liverpool to Teacher
Gordon W. Beharrel of Southport to Deacon
Gordon W. Beharrel of Southport to Teacher

London District

Ronald V. Ewer of West Drayton to Elder
Ian J. Smith of St. Albans to Teacher
John Anderson of St. Albans to Teacher
George V. Mosdell of Romford to Deacon
David Beaver of Reading to Elder
Brian W. Wilkinson of Reading to Deacon
Dougald McKeown of North London to Teacher
Raymond P. Howell of Catford to Deacon
Albert J. Clatworthy of Catford to Deacon

Manchester District

William W. Weston of Wythenshawe to Teacher
Derek J. Plumhley of Wythenshawe to Teacher
Eric Cryer of Wythenshawe to Teacher
Edward Gunn of Stockport to Teacher
George W. Wardle of Stockport to Teacher
Ian L. Thorpe of Ashton-Hyde to Deacon
Michael W. Page of Ashton-Hyde to Deacon

Newcastle District

John T. A. Dale of West Hartlepool to Deacon
John Gibson of West Hartlepool to Priest
Wilfred Rickmond of South Shields to Elder
Michael A. Lodge of South Shields to Deacon
Michael Lodge of South Shields to Deacon

Norwich District

William Walker, Jr., of Lowestoft to Priest
Sidney J. Gasson of Lowestoft to Priest
Donald F. LeGrice of Lowestoft to Priest
Edward A. Canham of Chelmsford to Priest
George H. Stevens of Chelmsford to Deacon

Nottingham District

Edgar R. Needham of Nottingham to Elder
Bertram Brown of Nottingham to Priest
Arthur E. Johnson of Loughborough to Elder

Scottish District

Thomas A. W. Granger of Paisley to Priest
Peter A. Heede of Paisley to Teacher
Christian I. Heeds of Paisley to Teacher
Ronald Todhunter of Paisley to Elder
Clarence Woodward of Paisley to Priest
James T. Watson of Glasgow to Priest
David S. M. Wile of Glasgow to Deacon
Leslie T. Lovell of Glasgow to Deacon
Oastler Montgomery of Glasgow to Priest
George Forsyth of Glasgow to Deacon
Robert S. Fraser of Glasgow to Deacon
Vincent A. Harvey of Glasgow to Deacon
George E. Jefferson of Edinburgh to Elder

Welsh District

John E. Woods of Swansea to Teacher

MISSIONARY ACTIVITIES

BAPTISMS :

Birmingham District

Patricia Dawn Goodway of Birmingham
Roy Alan Beale of Birmingham
Mary Irene Ashmead of Coventry

Bristol District

Minnie Gweneth Harrison of Cheltenham
Mary Edith Harrison Price of Cheltenham
Mary Rose Latter Simmons of Cheltenham
Peter David Simmons of Cheltenham
Andrew George Peterkin of Cheltenham
Maureen Irene Harris of Cheltenham

Hull District

Arthur Simon Denton of Grimsby
Betty Denton of Grimsby

Leeds District

Norman Ian Newill of Leeds
David Albert Puremont of Leeds
Kathleen Robinson of Halifax
Norman Pacy Newill of Leeds
Dorothy Newill of Leeds
Doreen Newsholme of Bradford
Maurice Newsholme of Bradford
Leslie Wikins Haste of Bradford
Margaret Sutcliffe of Huddersfield
David John Ridehough of Bradford
Margaret Ann Haste of Bradford
Stanley Allott of Dewsbury
Margaret Allott of Dewsbury
Louise Ann Rohertshaw of Bradford
Elaine Rohertshaw of Bradford

Liverpool District

Brian Jones of Liverpool
Patricia Cooney of Liverpool
Beryl Sweeney of Liverpool
Barbara Mannouch of Liverpool
Doreen Rimmer of Liverpool
June Aspinall of Liverpool
John William Jones of Liverpool

Alan James Jones of Liverpool

Doreen Holdsworth Jones of Liverpool

London District

Brian Kenneth Robinson of South London
William Edward Payne of South London
Robert John Graham of South London

Manchester District

Peter Withington of Rochdale
Peter Woodhead of Rochdale

Newcastle District

Sheila McKie of South Shields
John Thompson of Newcastle
Hazel Julia Sked of Newcastle
Alan Sked of Newcastle
Robert Best of West Hartlepool
Eileen Best of West Hartlepool
Sylvia Jean Selkirk of Newcastle

Norwich District

Michael Peter Blackwell of Gorleston
Keith John Blackwell of Gorleston
Joyce Evelyn Blackwell of Gorleston
Graham John Blackwell of Gorleston
Colin Thompson of Gorleston
Pauline Hannant of Gorleston
Peter Geoffrey Blackwell of Gorleston
Constance Ivy James of Lowestoft

Nottingham District

Janice Kathleen Stevenson of Nottingham
Jill Margaret Highton of Nottingham

Sheffield District

Stephen John Broome of Doncaster
William H. E. Moore of Doncaster

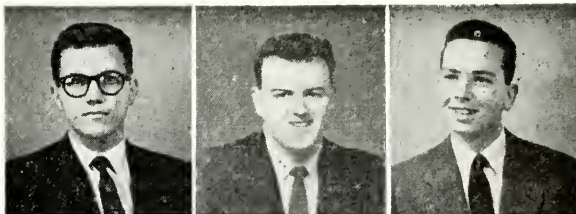
Welsh District

Alan Ivir Barr of Merthyr Tydfil
Austyn John P. Williams of Newport
Agnes Margaret Williams of Newport
Jean Neale of Swansea
Lorna Hooper of Swansea
Francis John Steele

TED M. DAVIS

STEPHEN G. McNEIL

CHARLES R. WRIGHT



KAY H. CHRISTENSEN

MILTON W. HAMMOND

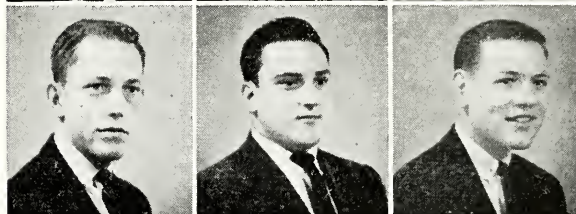
KENNETH D. THOMPSON



RICHARD L. ROBBINS

CLARENCE J. J. MASON

SYLVAN F. SEELY



ARRIVALS :

October 29, 1957

Sister Marla Alene Stone
Sister Marilyn Johnson
Sister Anne Coombs
Sister Ardythe Twitchell
Elder Clynn Wells Richman
Elder Richard Burton Oliver

From

Lakewood, California
Salt Lake City, Utah
Boulder, Utah
Delta, Utah
Promontory, Utah
Los Angeles, California

Assigned to

Ireland
Nottingham
Liverpool
Scotland
Wales
Wales

RELEASES :

November 8, 1957

Elder Milton W. Hammond
Elder Clarence J. J. Mason
Elder Kenneth D. Thompson
Elder Charles R. Wright
Elder Richard L. Robbins

November 22, 1957

Elder Ted M. Davis
Elder Kay H. Christensen
Elder Sylvan F. Seely
Elder Stephen G. McNeil

Las Vegas, Nevada
Salt Lake City, Utah
Jerome, Idaho
Salt Lake City, Utah
Springville, Utah

St. Anthony, Idaho
Ephraim, Utah
St. Anthony, Idaho
Springville, Oregon

Newcastle, Liverpool
Manchester, Wales
Liverpool, Nottingham
London, Liverpool
Birmingham, Wales

London, Leeds
Irish, London Office*
Wales, Manchester
Nottingham, Irish†

TRANSFERS :

Elder Gerald B. Drennan
Elder Merland J. Snarr
Elder Gerald A. Gygi
Elder Allen G. Brown
Elder Gerald J. Palmer
Elder Willis R. Dunkley, Jr.
Elder Arthur W. Sadler
Elder Albert C. Bennett
Elder Robert J. Hodgson
Elder James E. Scoresby
Elder Paul W. McClure
Elder Claudie R. Chynoweth

From

Birmingham
Leeds
Liverpool
Liverpool
Manchester
Norwich
Nottingham
Scottish
Wales
Wales
Newcastle
Newcastle

To

Liverpool
Scottish
Newcastle
Birmingham
Wales
Leeds
Norwich
Manchester
Newcastle
Nottingham
Liverpool
Wales

Date Effective

October 28, 1957
October 28, 1957
October 28, 1957
October 28, 1957
October 28, 1957
October 28, 1957
October 28, 1957
October 28, 1957
October 28, 1957
October 28, 1957
October 28, 1957
October 28, 1957

APPOINTMENTS :

Elder Joseph N. Hodgson appointed District President of the Irish District - November 22, 1957.
Elder Alan J. Dayley appointed Secretary in the Mission Presidency - November 22, 1957.

* Secretary in the Mission Presidency

† District President

THE TWO FAC

KING Agamemnon gave. He gave his daughter on behalf of his country. During the epic undertaking with 'Troy an adverse wind constrained the Greek fleet to the port of Aulis, brought to a standstill the entire enterprise of a whole nation.' The seer Calchas announced that Agamemnon had offended Artemis, and that the goddess demanded his daughter Iphigenia in expiation—and Agamemnon heroically made the sacrifice. The beautiful Iphigenia! Her delicate cheeks! Her golden hair! Graciously Agamemnon concealed the pain of sacrificing his beloved, that the incense of her burning might waft heavenward to please offended Artemis and save Greece; and he wept within. But noble as it seems, who will eulogise his gift? For with him all of Greece wept, revered his pain, honoured his exploit. It is true that he gave, but he gave only with the promise of a reward. He bargained with God and man and bought acclaim at a cheap price; having become a daughterless hero instead of a waning figurehead, he was more comforted by his gain than bruised by his loss. Under pretence of giving to others, Agamemnon gave to himself: victory for his prowess and honour for his magnanimity.

Abraham gave. By faith Abraham gained of God the promise that through his son Isaac all nations of the earth would be blessed.² Years passed, though without an Isaac the promise retained its possibility, Abraham believed. Years passed, Abraham became stricken in years, Sarah had long passed the age of child-bearing, the promise became unreasonable, Abraham believed. And God rewarded his belief; how Abraham must have loved his promised son!

Then God tested Abraham: "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering on one of the mountains which I will tell thee of." So all was lost—more terribly than if it had never been gained! So the Lord was taking from Abraham Isaac, his beloved son, through whom the great promise would be fulfilled: so the Lord was taking from Abraham the promise. Still, Abraham believed.

He rose early in the morning, saddled the ass, cleft the wood for the offering. Unlike Agamemnon, Abraham had no sympathetic soul to provide consolation, no one to reverence his sacrifice, no one to honour his deed. Unlike Agamemnon, Abraham had not the repose of earthly understanding, not the satisfaction of well-wishes. Abraham left behind his earthly understanding and took faith with him. His sole desire was to glorify God by his obedient giving.

Who can feel what Abraham felt on his three days' journey to Moriah? Yet even in that eleventh hour when Abraham was ready to give all that was his, he believed. He believed that through Isaac, all nations of the earth would be blessed. He bound his son, kissed him (how his soul must have wrenched in the hour of agony!), and unwaveringly raised the knife to strike. And the angel called: "Abraham, it is enough."

Because he had given wholly, of all he could give, without thought of consolation, or reward, or honour in men's eyes, but only to glorify God, Abraham descended the mount joyously, his father's arm embracing Isaac, possessing both the promise and the son, whom he loved.

Our Father in heaven gave.³ To do so He endured all that Abraham endured and more, for in this case the sacrificial hand was not stayed. He

ES OF GIVING

loved Jesus better than Abraham could ever love Isaac, for He had His Son with Him in the eternal worlds, faithful and true always, standing in a place of honour and trust. He loved Him dearly, yet He allowed His well-beloved Son to descend from His place of glory where millions did Him homage down to earth, a condescension not conceivable to man. He sent Him to receive insult, abuse and scorn. He heard the cry of His Son in the great moment of grief and agony in the garden, when the pores of His body opened and great drops of blood stood upon Him. "Father, if thou be willing, let this cup pass from me."

What father or mother could stand by and listen to a child in distress, and not assist? Parents throw themselves into raging streams or burning buildings to save their children, even when it is beyond their power to save them. Yet He might have saved Jesus from the insults of the crowds. He might have relieved Him when the crown of thorns was placed upon His head. He might have rescued Him when, hanging between two thieves, He was mocked: "Save thyself, and come down from the cross. He saved others; Himself He cannot save." God listened to all this. He saw His Son condemned. He saw Him drag the cross through Jerusalem and faint under the load. He saw His body stretched upon the wooden stake, the cruel nails driven through His hands and feet, the blows that broke the skin, tore the flesh, and let the life's blood flow from His Son. He beheld His agony until there came a moment when even the Saviour cried in despair, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?"

In that hour our Father looked upon the dying struggles of the Jesus He loved until even He could not bear it any longer; and, like the mother who, bidding farewell to her dying child, is overcome, He bowed His head, His great heart almost breaking for the love He had for His Son. O, in that moment when He might have saved Him, thank Him and praise Him that He did not fail us, for He had not only His love for His Son in mind, but also His love for us. Rejoice that He did not intervene, for because of that greatest of gifts we may now be glorified in His presence.

Agamemnon overcame much because he denied his daughter; Abraham overcame more because he denied himself. Agamemnon gave much because he gave his beloved in exchange for his reward; Abraham gave more because he gave both his beloved and his reward. Agamemnon was great because his sacrifice was acceptable to men; Abraham was infinitely greater because his sacrifice was in the similitude of the sacrifice of God.

Agamemnon gave his daughter to glorify himself; Abraham gave his son to glorify God. Our Heavenly Father gave His Only Begotten to provide all worthy mankind eternal joy and happiness.

To others, our giving may appear virtuous, as Agamemnon's. But is it virtuous to ourselves? Or to God? Ever may we give as Abraham and the Father have given!

¹ Euripides, *Iphigenia in Aulis*.

² Genesis Ch. 17, 22. Treatment of Grecian and Hebraic examples adapted from Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, Problems 1 & 2.

³ Entire portion on God adapted from initial treatment of theme by Melvin J. Ballard, *The Sacramental Covenant*.

JOHN, while on the Isle of Patmos, saw in vision things to come :
Saw an open door in heaven, and beheld the sacred throne.
And he saw the throne's Incumbent, heard the heavenly choirs sing,
Heard them shouting sweet hosannas unto Christ, their Lord and King.

And he saw another angel with a message heaven sent;
Saw him bring to earth the Gospel, calling nations to repent;
Saw the lake without a bottom, and the dragon bound with chains;
Saw one thousand years of concord, while in peace the Master reigns.

And he saw the holy city, new Jerusalem restored :
With the one who was the Christ Child reigning as its King and Lord.
Then he saw the small and great ones stand before the sacred throne
To be judged out of the records, saw the Lord select his own.

What then is our Christmas message ? Dare we talk goodwill and peace
In a world where all seems chaos, where enslaved millions seek release ?
Was it just an empty promise when the angels hailed his birth,
Or was their song inspired prediction of eventual peace on earth ?

Yes ! this is our Christmas message : Jesus, though of humble birth
Was Jehovah—is Messiah ! Once again he'll come to earth !
Let us then throughout the Yuletide join the heavenly choirs and sing
Praises to the Christ our Saviour : He our Lord shall be our King.

—Hugh B. Brown

Christmas Star

THE MILLENNIAL STAR

DECEMBER 1957

VOLUME 119, NUMBER 12